



ACOUSTIC GUITAR GOALS

1. Sensitive to the Holy Spirit
2. Working knowledge of the scales and chord families of A, C, D, E, F, G, Em, Am, Dm
3. Understands 1-4-5 method
4. A firm understanding of the 100% rule
5. Play in time with the metronome
6. Attentive to song leader during praise
7. Understands guitar "driven" songs versus piano "driven" songs
8. Understands E.Q., volume
9. Predominantly rhythm instrument

- A Guitar driven song just means the guitar is the main percentage in the %100 rule. This may mean just the acoustic guitar, or it may be just the electric guitar, or it could be both. Guitar driven tends to mean hard driving rhythm strumming.
- A piano driven song is just what you'd expect; the piano is the driving force for the song, the main percentage of the %100 rule. The job of the guitarist is to accent or accompany what the piano is doing; so no hard driving rhythm. All of these guidelines become blurry on some songs, so just use good judgment. Less is more.

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Here are some more in depth concepts for playing the acoustic guitar to lead a praise team. These are things I've been taught by good players, learned by watching and years of trial and error.

1. As living room players, playing with no amplification, we almost all play way too hard for what the job demands. I've had people describe the sound of a too hard strummer, as "it's so percussive, there's no notes coming out!" This problem is only solved with admitting the truth, and then self-control. The drums will cover all percussive needs (most of the time). Even a fast strumming song doesn't usually require strumming hard. Having enough acoustic in the monitor can help a lot. At home, in a quiet setting, try some different intensities of strumming. Find out what it feels like to strum so hard it distorts the sound, and then back off until you can play the same style with no strings buzzing (assuming your chord is held tight).
2. As living room players, playing with no band around us, we all play too many notes, strum too many times, or choose too intricate a strum pattern. If you stopped playing completely, and the band could hold the groove without you, then the acoustic guitar should not be doing much. If the song is more guitar driven, and you tried the same scenario and the band left a big hole in the groove, that's the time to have a complete strum pattern. Otherwise a strum here or there or a very loose pattern, lightly played, would be best. As learning musicians, we've spent our whole lives playing along with the radio or CD's, strumming along with other musicians and training ourselves to make a part for our instrument. The trait that has impressed me the most when watching the best musicians (I am referring to combo bands on TV or in concert) is how they seem to play only the notes that are necessary and no others; And the result is opposite of what you'd expect. You are more moved by the musical experience, in more awe of the musician's ability, and more pleased with the outcome!

These two concepts are adopted first in the heart and then into your playing. I expect to work on these two areas of my playing for the rest of my life. My good friend and fellow worship leader Steve Croft (a fabulous acoustic player by the way), placed a sticky note right on the top of his guitar so that he could read it during the worship service that simply stated "lighter and less".